

C10282a

University of Alberta Library

0 1620 2393 3144



EX LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTENSIS

The Bruce Peel
Special Collections
Library

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

BY

THOMAS SCOTT CUMBERLAND

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS


IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 2007



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
University of Alberta Library

<https://archive.org/details/Cumberland2007>

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

Submitted by Thomas Scott Cumberland in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Fine Arts.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: THOMAS SCOTT CUMBERLAND

TITLE OF THESIS: FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED: MASTER OF FINE ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED: 2007

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis, and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
Endless Summer	2007	Acrylic on Canvas	72.125"x 60.125"

VALUE: \$1,980

Somewhere in Between

As an artist born and raised in Saskatchewan, I am keenly aware of the space and flatness which are indicative of the prairies of Western Canada. I negotiate this space created by the flatness of the open prairies, aware of where I'm going and where I've been. This space allows me to examine and become highly attuned to all that exists around me. It is as though the flatness of the prairies, like the space created by the flatness of modern abstraction, has contributed to a contemplative space that slows me down and allows me time to truly appreciate my surroundings.

The study of space has always been a driving force behind my paintings. I take pleasure from exploring different approaches to the describing of space within the flat surface of a painting, and working with the traditional depiction of deeper space through the use of perspective and illusion.

In general, modernist abstraction painters moved away from three-dimensional illusion, an illusion that depicts volume within and on a flat surface thus one that alludes to a deeper space. As Clement Greenberg stated in his essay *Modernist Painting*, "realistic, naturalistic art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art: Modernism used art to call attention to art."¹ A painting has one distinct feature that separates it from sculpture and that is the flatness and two dimensionality of the surface. Prior to modernism, the flat surface of the painting was subverted by the illusion of volume. Modernism acknowledges the flat surface through the materiality of the medium and by moving away from three-dimensional illusion.

As with the prairies, I believe the space created by the flattened planes in modernist painting allows the viewer's gaze to slow, affording the viewer time to explore the art created through the formal elements and the medium. As an artist I am aware of the history of western modern abstraction and am concerned with the still relevant question of how to deal with the flattened space of modernism.

In my MFA thesis exhibition, I am attempting to put the flattened space of modernist painting into context by pairing two opposing spatial concepts, flat and volume, and exploring the ambiguity of where they meet. I introduce the very element that modernism moved away from, three-dimensional illusionism and deeper space. It is my intention to allow illusion, in the form of a ribbon, to interact with the flattened space and the materiality of the medium thereby acknowledging and celebrating the flatness of the painted surface. My goal by pairing two different spatial concepts is to provide context, and this context is the ambiguity found in the space *somewhere in between*.

Scott Cumberland
November 2007

¹ Greenberg, Clement. "Modernist Painting" *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (New York, 1982). <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/modernism.html>. Accessed on 07/01/2007.

Acknowledgments

I believe who we are is defined and comprised of our life experiences. Every person, place and thing that we come into contact with forever leaves a trace and fundamentally changes who we are. With that in mind, I feel it is important to thank all those who have had an impact on my life over the last two years. Ultimately, you have all contributed to the exhibition before you.

My heartfelt thanks and gratitude goes out to my wife, Clare. I'm not quite sure I could have done this without her. Clare's unwavering support and strength have allowed me to keep pushing through when I thought I couldn't. More importantly, her keen eye has saved a painting or two from ending up on the garbage pile.

Thank you to my entire family, the Cumberlands, Brownes, Walshs, O'Malley and Maslen-Walshs for their enthusiasm, support and constant encouragement.

Thank you to the University of Alberta's Art and Design Department faculty and staff for their never ending support and guidance.

Thank you Dick Der, Blair Brennan and Ruby Mah for always being there to lend a hand; you were always there to answer my many questions, taking time out of your day to help me in the shop, or finding work for me so I could continue to buy my supplies.

A special thank you to Graham Peacock and Allen Ball for their sound, constructive advice and for continually challenging me to push my work further; it is because of you that I am able to mount this exhibition.

A large debt of gratitude is owed to my studio mates, Brenda Christiansen, Sherri Chaba, Gillian Willans, Yan Geng and Kim Sala. They are responsible for a significant portion of my education whether it be me sauntering into their studio space on daily basis to ask their opinions and advice or debating the emotive properties of colour in historical paintings. In my studio mates I have found colleagues and life long friends.

Thank you to the Fine Arts Building Gallery staff, Blair Brennan, Megan Bertagnolli, Brent Wasyk, Maria Madacky, Chris Berry, Ruiling Song, and Allison Murray for their professionalism and sound advice in the installation of this exhibition.

Thank you to my defense committee, Graham Peacock, Betsy Boone, Liz Ingram, Doug Haynes and Howard Bashaw for taking the time to participate in this very important academic benchmark.

...and thank you to everyone else that I have met along the way including fellow graduate students, professors, artists, and undergraduate students. Every studio visit and every conversation has had an impact on both me and my studio practice.

Scott Cumberland

Somewhere in Between
Slide List

1. Molten – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 58 in x 47.25 in
2. Pod – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 16 in x 25.75 in
3. Dancing with Dragons – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 47.625 in 89.75 in
4. Endless Summer – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 72.125 in x 60.125 in
5. Slip Sliding Away – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 60 in x 48.25 in
6. Elements – 2007, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 91 in x 57.25 in
7. Comet – 2007, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 104 in x 45.5 in
8. Purple Slip – 2007, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 59 in x 48.25 in
9. They Paved Paradise – Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 24 in x 36 in
10. Embedded – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 47.25 in x 37.75 in
11. Emergence – 2007, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 23.75 in x 32.25 in
12. Flux – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 71.75 in x 48.25 in
13. Cascade – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 72 in x 48.25
14. Opulence – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 52.375 in x 84 in
15. Just Dessert – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 48.25 in x 60 in
16. Somewhere in There – 2007, Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 72 in x 60 in
17. Dark Carnival – 2007, Acrylic on Canvas, 59.5 in x 72.25 in
18. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007
19. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007
20. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007
21. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007
22. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007
23. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007
24. Somewhere in Between – Installation Detail, 2007

Scott Cumberland
November 2007

